DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 249 099 SE 045 113

TITLE	Signs of Fall. A Fall Activity Packet for Pre-School.
INSTITUTION	Jackson Community Coll., MI. Dahlem Environmental Education Center.
SPONS AGENCY	Department of Education, Washington, DC. Inst. of Museum Services.
PUB DATE	82
GRANT	G008103172
NOTE	30p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Dahlem Environmental Education Center, Jackson Community College, 7117 South Jackson Rd., Jackson, MI 49201.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Elementary School Mathematics; *Elementary School Science; *Environmental Education; *Field Trips; Interdisciplinary Approach; Language Arts; *Learning Activities; Outdoor Activities; Preschool Education; Science Activities; *Sensory Experience; Sensory Training; Skill Development; Tactual Perception
IDENTIFIERS	*Seasons

ABSTRACT

This instructional packet is one of 14 school environmental education programs developed for use in the classroom and at the Dahlem Environmental Education Center (DEEC) of the Jackson Community College (Michigan). Provided in the packet are pre-trip activities, field trip activities, and post-trip activities which focus on the characteristics of the fall season. Strategies for using these activities with preschool children are also provided. The pre-trip activities focus on exploring with the senses (touching, smelling/tasting, seeing, and hearing) and exploring colors, sizes, shapes, and the seasons. Four activity sheets and a letter to parents explaining the purpose of the program are included. The post-trip activities provide children with experiences related to seriation, counting, matching, and thinking about future seasons. A list of formal and non-formal objectives and instructions for both indoor and outdoor field trip activities at the DEEC are provided in a separate field trip guide. (JN)

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"Signs of Fall" is one of fourteen school environmental education programs developed by the Dahlem Environmental Education Center of the Jackson Community College. Assistance for the Project was provided by the Institute of Museum Services Special Projects Grant #G008103172, of the U.S. Department of Education.

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Signs of Fall

A Fall Activity Packet for Pre-school

Crackle! Whoosh! Snap! These familiar sounds remind us that autumn is here.

Fall is a special time of year; a season of colorful changes, warm smells, and crisp sounds. The "Signs of Fall" program at the Dahlem Environmental Education Center is an active learning adventure that will introduce your children to the wonder and magic of nature, both at the Center and in their own backyards!

The pre-trip activities invite your children to use their senses to explore their world of different colors, shapes, and sizes. By associating a variety of their observations with the seasons, the children will recognize the differences between fall, winter, spring, and summer.

The indoor orientation at the Center gives the children practice using their senses to explore fall. A short discussion of autumn's signs will prepare them for the outdoors. There, colorful leaves, juicy berries, soft mosses, and active caterpillars will become original discoveries for every group of little people as they wind down the trails. They will investigate and classify natural objects, and observe the environment from different viewpoints.

In the post-trip activities, the links between nature at home and outdoors will be reinforced as will communication, matching, numbering, and sequencing skills.

So bundle up and put on a smile to welcome in that special season, fall.

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Goals and Objectives

Program Goal

Pre-school children will become more aware of the characteristics of fall by exploring their environment.

Program Objectives

Children will:

-appreciate their senses and sense organs by identifying and using them.

-identify and appreciate the signs of fall by actively exploring the natural, home, and school environments.

-discriminate among fall, winter, spring, and summer by describing seasonal activities.

-appreciate language by creating and listening to poems and stories.

-identify objects by hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling them.

-classify things according to color, shape, and size by sorting, matching, and sequencing.

-develop logical reasoning by describing the characteristics objects do not possess.

-understand spatial relations by observing things in nature and around the home from different viewpoints.

-develop socialization skills by passing objects around a circle of classmates and by working with a partner.

Pre-Trip Activities

The fall season provides a veritable banquet for our senses. The following five topics are intended to provide a framework of activity ideas you can use to build your children's awareness and interests. There are many different ways to create an active learning environment; these ideas are intended to provide a beginning -- please continue with your own. Many ideas in this packet can be individualized for each student or adapted for learning centers. Your role is to lay the foundation for learning, and to let each individual progress at his/her own pace.

1. Exploring with Senses

Begin the pre-trip activities by helping the children identify and understand their senses. One way to do this is to point out the sense organs (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin) and describe the function of each (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching). You can make a faceless puppet to assist you by attaching yarn to the end of a sock. Use plastic eyes, beads, felt, and construction paper to make the features. A piece of velcro on the back of each object will make it stick to the puppet. After looking at the facial features of a classmate, children can arrange the sense organs on the puppet.

When the children have mastered the structure and spatial arrangement of the sense organs on the puppet, provide extra parts: closed eyes, different hair, smiling and frowning mouths, etc. By observing changing expressions on their classmates' faces, children can create a puppet face to match.

You might also want to try:

• playing "Simon Says." These commands should get you started.

"Simon says touch your ear."
"Simon says open your mouth."
"Simon says close your eyes."
"Simon says sniff with your nose."

• word associations by phrasing questions in this format:

"Do you use your eyes to smell a flower?"
"Do you use your nose to taste an apple?"
"Do you use your ears to hear music?"

• songs and rhymes that involve finger plays and motions. Here are some examples*:

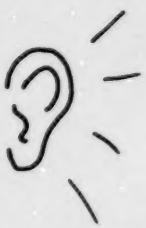
The poem "I Have" can encourage the children to name things they enjoy touching, seeing, hearing, etc.

I HAVE

by Virginia P. Brown

Two hands to feel
Some grains of rice,
Soap suds, cotton
And cubes of ice.

Two eyes to see
The light of the moon,
Clown tricks, colors
And big ballons.



Two ears to hear
The raindrops come,
Laughter, whistles,
The beat of a drum

One nose to smell
The chocolate cake,
Perfume, soap and
The rolls that bake.

One mouth to taste
The juice of a plum,
Popcorn, carrots and
Licorice gum.

This fingerplay may help children practice identifying their sense organs. As they say the poem aloud, encourage them to point to their eyes, ears, etc.

Two eyes are for looking.
Two ears are for listening.
One nose is for smelling.
One mouth is for tasting.
Ten fingers are for touching.

* *from "Sensitizing the Senses" and printed with permission from Kent Intermediate School District, Grand Rapids, MI.*

Touching. One way children can learn to identify and compare textures is to work together to make a Feely Book for the class. Place a variety of textured, flat objects in a paper bag: foil, fake fur, felt, wax paper, various grades of sandpaper, etc. Have each child pull an object from the bag. Help them glue the samples on a piece of paper. As they identify the texture for you, write their descriptions beneath the objects: "soft," "hairy," "sort of squishy," etc. Punch holes in the stack of pages and thread them together with yarn. After you print "Our Feely Book" on the cover, encourage the children to "read" the book with their fingers. See if they can find objects around the room and at home that match the textures in their Feely Book.*

* *modified from Heath Science, Level K and printed with permission from D.C. Heath and Company.*

Smelling and Tasting. A simple poem can help children actively explore the environment with their senses of smell and taste.

Sniff, sniff, I smell a snack!
Sniff, sniff, makes my lips smack!
Sniff, sniff, oranges, pineapple,
Peach, banana, too.
Sniff, sniff, makes me hungry,
How about you?

The poem can be expanded into a variety of activities. For one idea, place slices of oranges, pineapple, peaches, and bananas on separate plates. Cover each plate with foil and punch small holes in the top. Then read the poem to the children. They can act out the sniffing, lip-smacking, and tummy-rubbing. Encourage the children to identify the scents they sniff through the holes in the foil. Finish up by serving the fruit slices for a snack!

Activity Sheet 1 provides a simple activity to help the children see how nature overlaps with their home environment. It also gives the children practice using their sense of smell.

If you can duplicate the handout master, give each child a copy to color. For a different approach, make a large poster and invite everyone to help color it. Ask the children to describe the picture.

Some may notice that one half of the page is an outdoor scene and the other is an indoor scene. Point out that there are differences between the human and natural environments -- in the human environment we buy almost everything (e.g. house plants) from stores; in nature, plants and animals grow by themselves. From which environment did the things in your classroom come? Of which world are the children a part? What can live in both environments?

This activity sheet can also be used as a smelling exercise. Scent some cottonballs with perfume and help the children glue them onto the center of each flower. The poster flower could accommodate everyone's cottonball. Do your flowers smell real?

Seeing. Give the children practice at "spotting" animals by showing them Activity Sheet 2. If the picture is colored so the the animals' natural coloring blends in the environment, an extra challenge will be added.

Activity Sheet 3 provides a basic idea that can be expanded to help children develop their classification skills. The activity helps children describe what characteristics objects do not possess. With copies of this sheet or a design of it on the blackboard or flannelboard, children can pick out the picture in each set that does not match the one on the left. You might also gather objects from home and nature for the children to manipulate and sort -- acorns with and without caps, leaves with and without stems, mittens with and without mates, etc.

Hearing. Children will gain experience in recognizing objects as they listen to a tape recording you have made of assorted sounds: a car horn beeping, a siren blaring, a bird singing, a door slamming, a cow mooing, a dog barking, etc. Ask the children to identify each sound. Is the sound from the natural environment, the human environment, or both? Is the sound loud or soft? Which sounds do they think they will hear on their field trip? At home this evening?

2. Exploring Colors

Recognizing and learning the names of colors also builds classification and communication skills. The following activities will prepare the children for observing and matching fall colors on the field trip.

• Help the children practice recognizing colors, either individually or in a group, by asking them to find something red in the room, such as the red crayon in the box. The following ideas may spark even more "colorful" activities!

• Play Simon Says with colors using commands like:

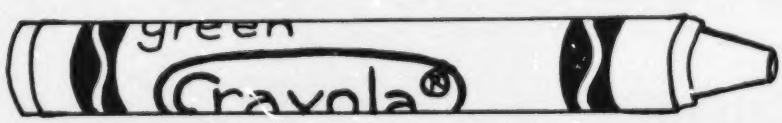
"Simon says hold up a yellow crayon."
"Simon says go stand by something red."
"Simon says hold hands with someone wearing brown."

• Play "Hennery Brown." As you read the story, have children clap when they hear the name of a color or hold up the correct color crayon or piece of paper.*

HENNERY BROWN

One night when I had gone to bed,
An idea popped into my head.
I got a pencil and wrote it down,
It was the story of Hennery Brown.

On a sunny day, as I walked to town,
I met a man named Hennery Brown.
This Hennery was the strangest fellow,
His pants were purple, and his shirt was yellow,
His shoes were orange and his eyes were blue,
His ears were HUGE, and his mouth was too,
His nose was long and sometimes red,
'Cause he often stood upon his head.
His hair was stringy and long and green,
The greenest hair I have ever seen.
He carried a cane that was big and black,
As he walked it made a clickety-clack.
Oh, he was funny, this Hennery Brown,
The man I met as I walked to town.



To extend the activity you could draw a life-size picture of Hennery. Trace one of your students on heavy paper. Then ask the children to color Hennery's outfit according to the poem.

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3. Exploring Sizes

Put your best foot forward, everybody! Your feet will help you practice classifying and sizing objects in preparation for the field trip.

• Collect one shoe from each child, and ask small groups of children to compare several shoes. Which is the smallest and the largest?

• With some help the children may enjoy tracing their feet onto paper and comparing the sizes. Can they arrange all the tracings in one line from the smallest to the biggest?

• Have the children help you collect things -- three of each! Apples, leaves, acorns, toy trucks, and stones should provide enough variation so that the children can identify the smallest, the largest, and the middle-sized object in each set.

4. Exploring Shapes

Observing, classifying, and comparing shapes in the natural and built environments also builds skills. Introduce the basic shapes and their names to the children. Some of these ideas may help you.

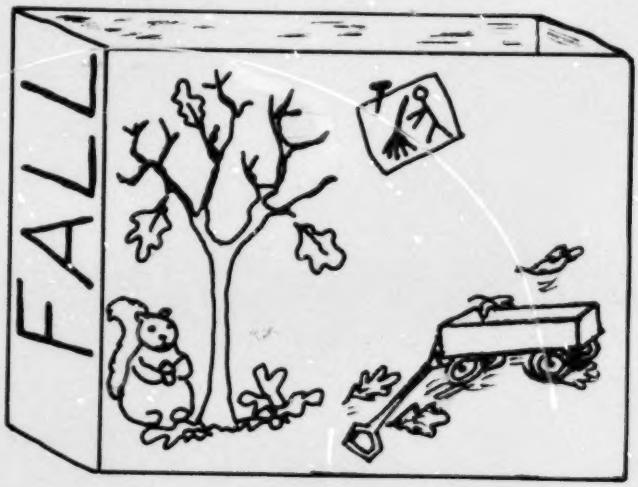
• Have the children match things around the room to the shapes they have learned.

• Ask the children to sit in a circle. While playing music, pass around a paper bag containing construction paper shapes in various colors. Stop the music at intervals and tell the child with the bag to pull out a shape and identify it. After s/he returns it to the bag, begin the music and bag-passing again. On another round, have the children identify the colors and shapes!

5. Exploring Seasons

Most pre-school children have difficulty comprehending time sequences and cycles of events. In a study of seasons, then, the emphasis must be on observing and distinguishing seasonal changes. Here is an idea for a learning center about the seasons.

• Set up a box to represent each season. Print the name of the season on the outside of the box. You might want to decorate the boxes with representative colors (winter/white, fall/orange, etc.), or a branch with leaves made out of appropriately colored construction paper. (See Activity Sheet 4.) The winter box could have a bare twig.



Fill the boxes with natural and human-related objects associated with each season. The summer box, for example, might include a bathing suit, beach ball, fan, vacation postcards, ice cream-less cones, and pictures of children involved in summer activities. Perhaps the students would like to contribute to the boxes with items from home.

"Tour" the season boxes with the children. Ask them to tell what they see. Have the children talk about experiences they've had in each season. Encourage them to express their feelings about the seasonal activities they enjoy. Students can enact the activities they like most -- making angels in the snow, splashing through puddles, planting a garden, jumping in a pile of leaves. Do the same for the things they enjoy the least -- shivering, sweating, catching cold, getting sunburned, putting on lots of heavy clothes, etc.

Vocabulary Words

The program activities use the following words:

senses:	sense organs:	seasons:
hearing	eye	spring
touching	ear	summer
seeing	nose	fall
smelling	skin	winter
tasting	tongue	

shapes:	colors:
square	red
circle	yellow
rectangle	blue
triangle	green
	purple
	orange
	white
	black

Activity Sheet 1: Smelling and Tasting

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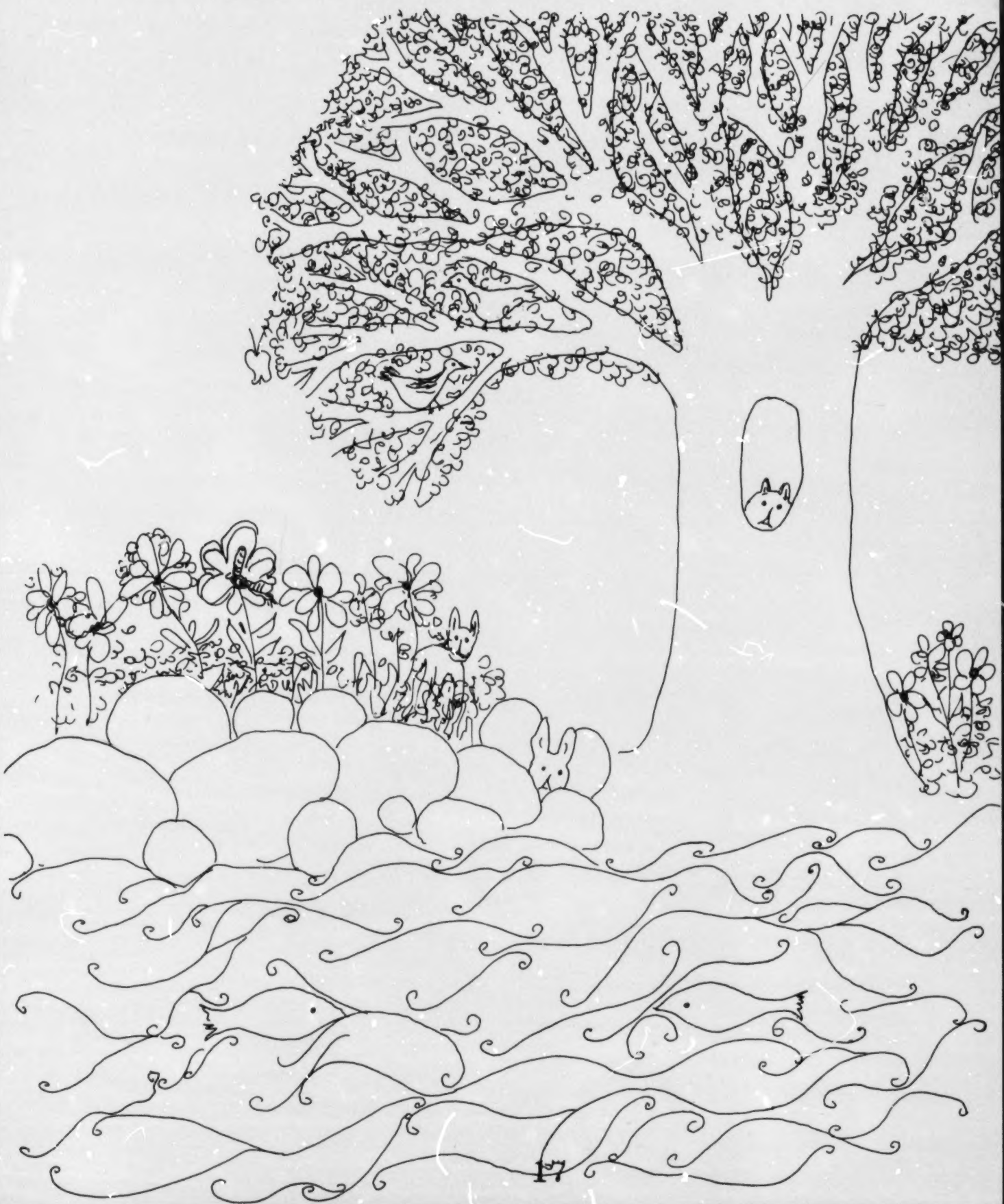
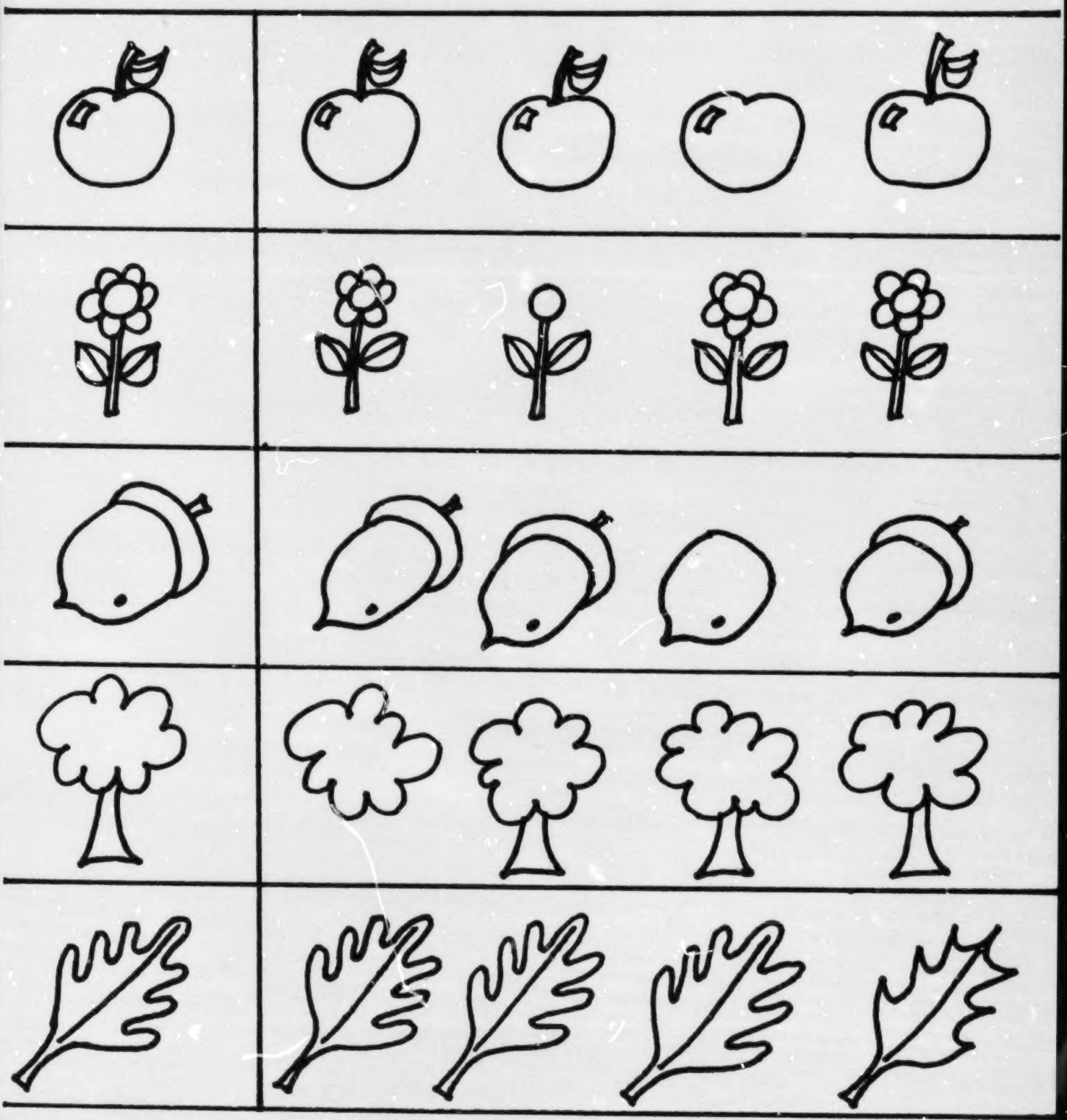
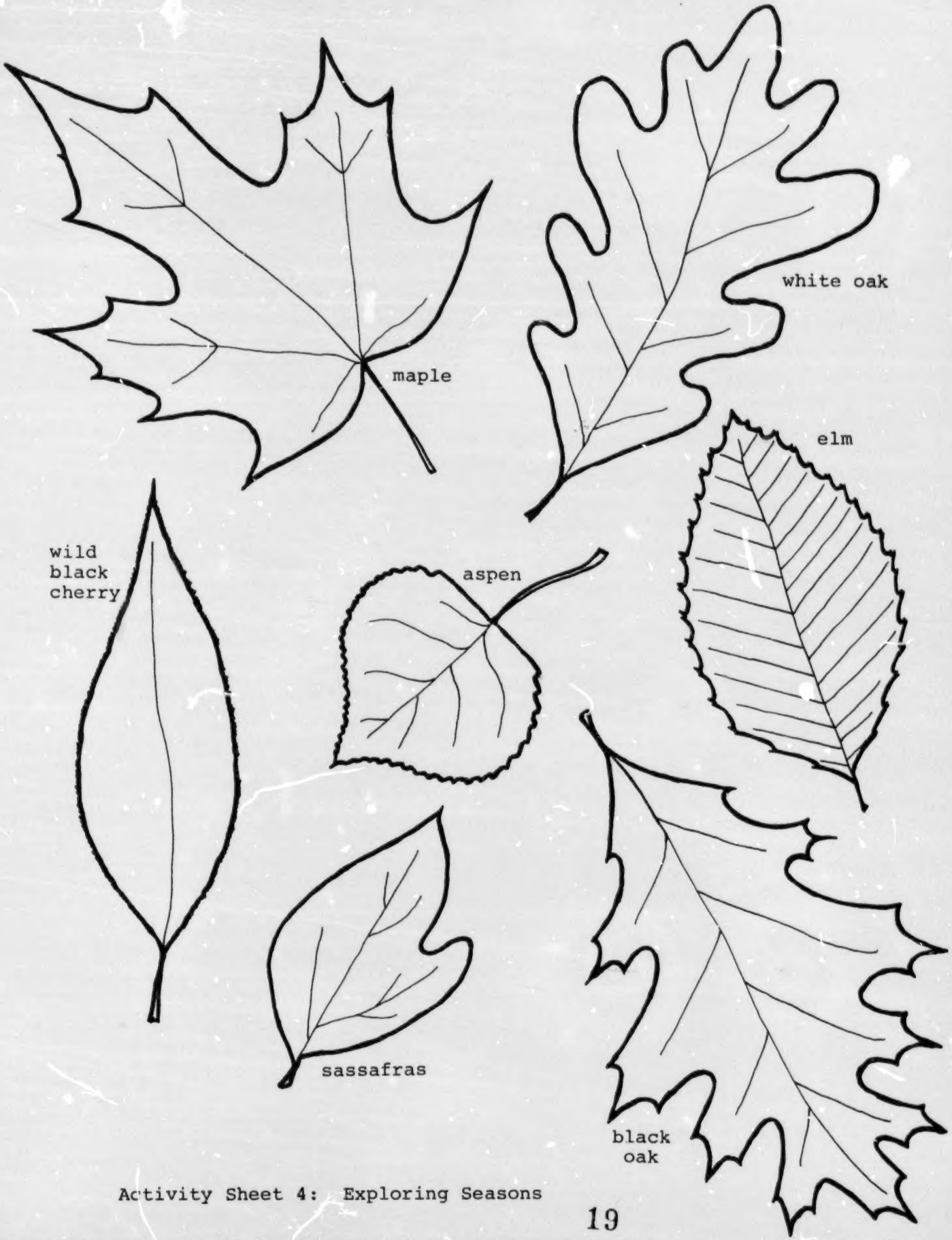
Activity Sheet 2: Seeing





Activity Sheet 3: Seeing


maple
white oak
elm
wild
black
cherry
aspen
sassafras
black
oak

Dear Parent:

Autumn is in the air! Your son/daughter will have the opportunity to experience autumn firsthand on our field trip to the Dahlem Environmental Education Center. There we will use all of our senses to explore the signs of fall: colorful leaves, juicy berries, soft mosses, and active caterpillars, to name a few.

Please make sure that your child is dressed appropriately for the seather. Sturdy shoes and layered clothes are wise. In the event of rain, rain gear and water repellent shoes are recommended.

You can share the benefits of our fall study with your child by:

- encouraging the child to express what s/he experienced on the field trip.
- pointing out seasonal changes around your home and neighborhood.
- helping him/her collect and sort a variety of shapes, sizes, and colors of fall leaves.
- participating in autumn activities with your child -- raking and jumping in leaves, carving pumpkins and baking the seeds, visiting a cider mill and drinking cider, playing fall sports, etc.

Sincerely,

Pre-school Teacher

Field Trip

By now your children have gotten to know each other and have learned to use their senses to identify colors, sizes, and shapes. The background you've given them will help the children explore the signs of fall at the Dahlem Environmental Education Center.

Your field trip will begin with an indoor review of how we use our senses to explore the world around us. Each child will then "pick" a leaf to match with natural objects on the hike. Outdoors, the children will sense a variety of textures, smells, sounds, and sights. A caterpillar might tickle their hands! They may even view the world from an ant's perspective. Hopefully, fall will become a special season to you and your children as a result of your Dahlem Center experience.

Back in the classroom, the post-trip activities will help you relate experiences in the natural environment to those in the children's everyday lives. Language, reasoning, and active learning skills will be further emphasized.

Please ask your students to wear long pants and outdoor shoes on the day of the field trip. In addition, remind everyone that the plants and animals at the Dahlem Center are for everyone to enjoy. Children should remember to leave their "special finds" for other visitors to discover.

Post-Trip Activities

You can extend the field trip experiences by weaving objects and concepts from the world of nature into the children's daily activities. You might want to combine the following five activities with your own ideas to bring nature into your classroom!

1. Let's Pretend: A Review

An effective way to link the field trip to the children's daily routine and to reinforce the concept of time is to lead the children in remembering and reenacting field trip experiences. Suggest some activities first, then have the children decide what to imitate. Differentiate between activities that occurred before the hike, during the hike, and after the hike. You might try:

Let's pretend:

- we're walking in the door of the interpretive building before the hike.
- we're walking loudly across the bridge during the hike.
- we're leaves falling from a tree that we saw on the hike.
- we're the chipmunks we saw storing seeds during the hike.
- we're running home to tell our parents about the field trip!

2. Seriation

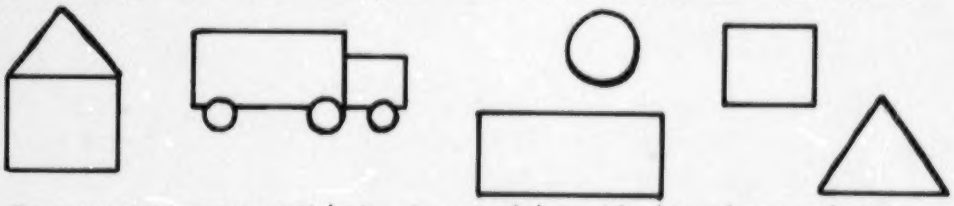
Imaginative children can have fun with out-of-order pictures like those on Activity Sheet 5. You could duplicate a copy for each child, or back the pictures with flannel so they can be arranged on a flannel board. Ask the children to make up stories to explain different arrangements of the pictures. Encourage variety and originality!

3. Counting

Remember those piles of acorns, leaves, fruits, and stones? Your children can also count these objects, and practice matching number cards to the piles with the same amount of objects.

4. Matching

In the pre-trip activities, the children were introduced to basic shapes. On the field trip, children matched shapes in nature. Now have the children use basic shapes to make pictures. Cut out a variety of squares, triangles, rectangles, and circles. Show the children how to fit shapes together to make a new shape. Can they make one of these?



Encourage your artists to combine their pieces into different shapes. A little glue will make permanent, shapely displays!

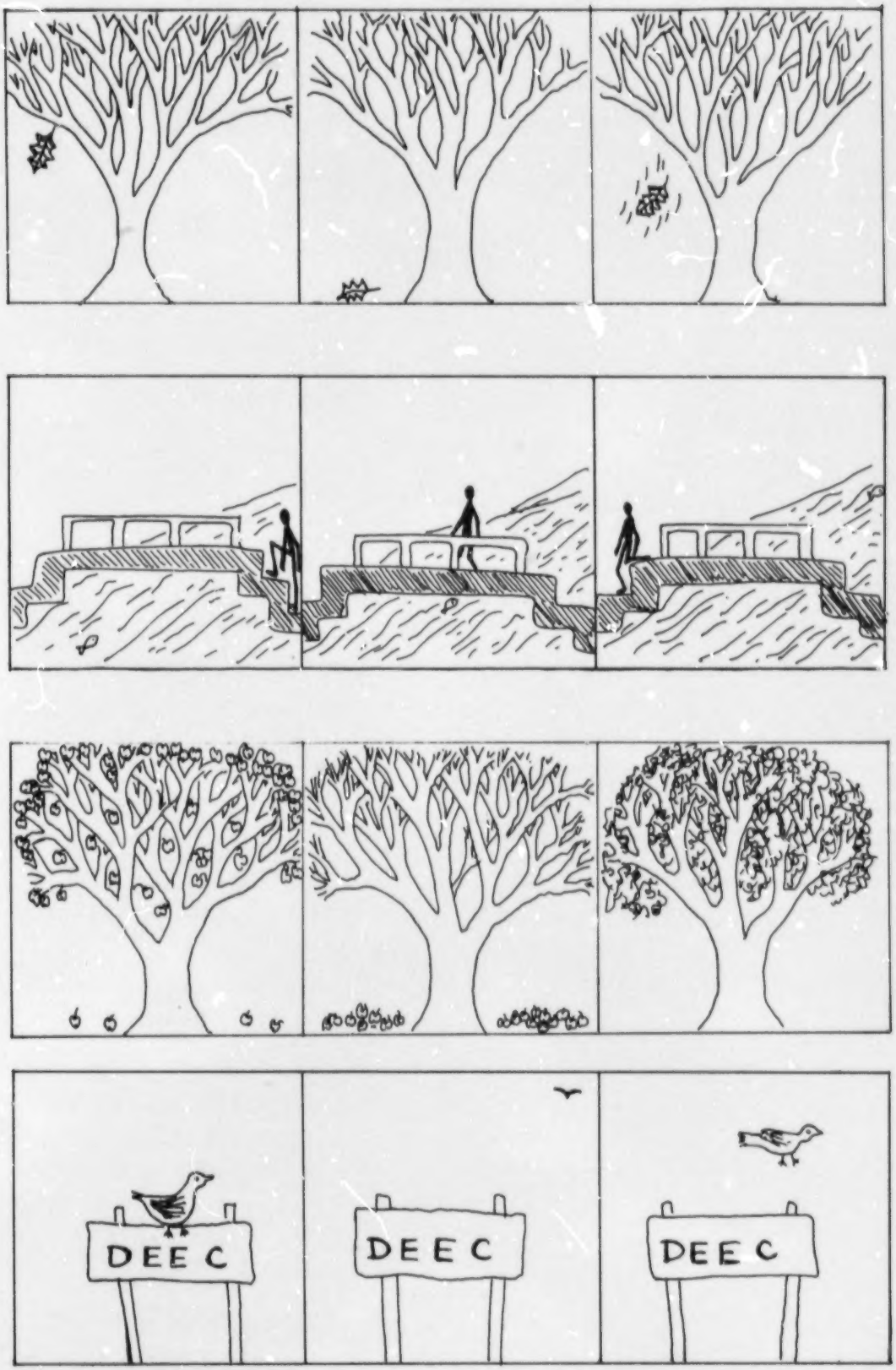
5. Coming Up

Don't stop yet! -- The study of seasons is a year-round activity! Why not hike around your school searching for clues of seasonal change? Explore the inside and outside of the building. Focus attention on a few permanent objects: a stately tree, an unpaved parking lot, the coatroom, flower beds. Observe them now for fall characteristics. As the children describe what they see, write their words down.

In a month or two, hike around the school again to compare and record changes. What's in the coatroom now? How has the tree changed? What is the condition of the parking lot? Also consider a field trip in the spring so the children can compare nature's signs of fall to the signs of spring.

Way to go -- you've made it through "Signs of Fall" with flying colors! You've introduced a range of skills to your children on which they will build throughout the winter -- and during the rest of their lives. So take a break! Go for a walk in the crisp autumn air and feast yourself on the colors and wonders of this special season, fall.

Activity Sheet 5: Seriation



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These books are available at the Jackson District Library. Similar titles may be found at the Jackson District Library's 16 branches under the same Dewey Decimal numbers.

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AT REMC...

The Jackson County Intermediate School District's Regional Education Media Center has these audio-visual aids:

Filmstrip/Cassette Sets:

"Environmental Awareness"	SE 477
"Learning About the Seasons"	KT 254
"Seeing the Seasons Change"	SE 1338

Motion Pictures:

"Animal Behavior -- Fall"	MP 572
"Autumn is An Adventure"	MP 70
"A Visit to A Nature Center"	MP 2452
"Birds are Interesting"	MP 603
"Our Animal Neighbors"	MP 1914

SIGNS OF FALL

Pre-school Field Trip

Formal Objectives:

Students will:

-identify the senses and sense organs by pointing them out

-identify and appreciate seasonal changes in the natural environment and around the home by actively exploring with all the senses.

-identify objects in nature by hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling them.

-classify things according to color, shape, and size by matching them with their paper leaves.

-understand spatial relations by observing things in nature from different viewpoints.

Non-formal Objectives:

Children will be given the opportunity to:

-explore fall with all the senses.

-notice the variety of colors, shapes, and textures in fall.

-enjoy the outdoors.

Indoor:

Welcome the group. Introduce yourself and the Dahlem Center. Then review the signs of fall with the children.

THE FALL SEASON: EXPLORING WITH SENSES -- Use the season wheel to help the children review the main characteristics of each season. Begin with winter, and proceed sequentially to fall. Emphasize and compare characteristics that pre-schoolers would notice: cold vs. hot, building snowmen vs. swimming, and planting a garden vs. raking leaves. Holidays are a popular way to differentiate seasons.

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Tell the children that today they will explore fall using all their senses. But first they must practice!

To begin the "Peanut Practice" exercise, give each child a salted peanut in a shell. Use the senses chart as an aid. Ask the children to look at the peanut and describe it.

*Touch the Peanut.
How does it feel?
What part of the body did you use to feel it?
(skin or fingers)
What does skin/fingers help you do? (feel things)
-- write "feel" on the chart beside fingers, and read it aloud to the group.

*Listen to the Peanut
Does the peanut make a noise? What Kind? (rattling)
What part of the body did you use? (ears)
What do ears help us do? (hear)
-- write "hear" on the chart beside the ear, and read it aloud.

Have the children crack open their peanuts for the rest of the observations.

*Describe/see the Peanut.
What do you see? (round, egg-shaped, brown)
What did you use to find this out? (eyes)
What do eyes help you do? (see)
-- Write "see" and read it aloud.

*Smell the Peanut.
Does the peanut have a smell? (yes)
What did you use to find this out? (nose)
What does your nose help you do? (smell)
-- write "smell" beside the picture of the nose and read it aloud.

*Eat the Peanut
How does the peanut taste? (salty)
What part of your body did you use? (tongue)
What does the tongue do? (taste)
-- write "taste" and read it aloud to the group.

Stress that we use all of our senses to tell us about things around us.

SIGNS OF FALL: CHANGES -- Now that their senses are in practice, the children are ready to explore. Briefly suggest signs of fall for them to watch for: caterpillars, colored leaves, galls, etc.

Before the group moves outdoors, have each child pick a fall leaf from the "tree." Tape the leaf on the child's sleeve. This will be used to match colors and shapes during the hike. Divide the group into small groups with an adult leader for each group. Have each child show his/her leaf to the group leader and tell what color it is.

Remind the children to stay with their group on the trails during the hike, and to leave everything growing so that others can enjoy it, too.

Outdoors:

Take with you a pack of color cards, and lead a sensory hike using touch, smell, fell, etc. Be alert for the following items:

*Smell: Use sassafras, Queen Anne's Lace (What from you kitchen does this smell like? White cedar (What in the medicine cabinet smells like this?) Soil from different locations, and everything else you find to compare or note smells.

*Feel: Mullein leaves (What animal does this feel like? also called "Lamb's ear"), varieties of evergreen needles (spruce and pine) to compare textures, barks, (Have you felt this around your house or school? Marble floors, bricks, stairs, etc.)

*Hear: Have the children stand quietly in one place, with eyes closed, listening for sounds. What did they hear?

*See: At one location have the children search for a color that matches the leaf pinned on their sleeve. They should stand beside the object, then show it to the group and leader. Another time, have them match the shape. At the end of the hike, have them find someone in the class with the same leaf and walk back to the Center with them

All the way along the trail, a variety of objects can be used to match colors, compare shapes, count pieces, and order by size; Acorns, leaves petals, woodchips, holes, kids, flowers, rocks, etc.

Help the children see nature from nature's perspective. Have them view the world or their group leader as an ant would (from lying flat on the ground), from a dog's viewpoint (on all fours), and from a bird's perspective (perched on a low limb of some sturdy tree). How do they feel as each animal? What do they see differently from their human point of view?

Return:

A Simon Says game can review field trip concepts as the children walk back with partners. Use leads such as:

Simon Says:

*point to a red tree.
*walk loudly.
*listen for a bird.
*pretend you're sniffing a mint plant.
*point to your ears.

At the end of the hike you can sit in a circle and review the trip's highlights by asking what each of them enjoyed the most. Encourage them to return with their families and thank them for coming!